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SUBJECT: MG FASTABEND'S MAY 8 MEETING WITH IRAQI VP HASHEMI

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel V. Speckhard for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

I1. (C) Summary: In a May 8 meeting with Iraq's Sunni VP Tariq Hashemi, MNF-I Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Operations MG Fastabend underscored MNF-I support for Anbar province volunteers to the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Coalition efforts to look into problems with recruits' pay; explained MNF-I reaction to an attack against Iraqi Security Forces in Samarra; and urged VP Hashemi not to pull his Sunni Tawafuq bloc out of the GOI. Hashemi complained about not having anything to show the Sunni community for its involvement in the GOI, adding that a Tawafuq pullout was not yet decided but he was seriously considering it. However, the PM had recently met with Hashemi and promised to change some of his policies. Hashemi said his Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) is losing political ground to al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) among Sunnis, and implied that MNF-I is releasing AQI detainees under "suspicious" circumstances. Hashemi expressed frustration at the lack of releases of Sunni detainees in MNF-I custody. End Summary.

MNF-I Response to Samarra Attack

I2. (C) MG Fastabend told Hashemi that the DCM had passed to GEN Petraeus his concerns about Shia militia presence in the Bayaa neighborhood in Baghdad's al-Rashid district. Fastabend told Hashemi MNF-I is aware of the sectarian challenges in that neighborhood and is working to eliminate all militia elements and would appreciate any information Hashemi could provide that would help.

I3. (C) MG Fastabend also addressed Hashemi assertions that the U.S. military is blocking the authorization necessary to pay two battalions of ISF volunteers in the Al Qaim and Fallujah areas of heavily-Sunni Anbar province. MG Fastabend reminded Hashemi of our strong record of support for the Anbar ISF volunteers, and our intent to continue that support. He asked Hashemi for more information reference our alleged non-support; Hashemi referred him to the Governor's office and PJCC.

I4. (C) MG Fastabend told Hashemi GEN Petraeus is offended because of allegations Hashemi made to Ambassador Speckhard that MNF-I stood by and did nothing during the 06 May attack on police headquarters in Samarra, in heavily-Sunni Salah ad Din province, which resulted in the death of the police chief. Fastabend showed Hashemi a map and diagram of the attack, and detailed the attack and MNF-I response - minute by minute -- which resulted in Coalition Forces killing five attackers and incurring two U.S. soldiers wounded in action. MG Fastabend closed by reminding the Vice President that all armies have pride and our Army was offended by the implication that we stood and watched as our brothers were attacked. Hashemi seemed to accept MG Fastabend's explanation and replied "the message has been delivered."

¶ 15. (C) MG Fastabend told Hashemi the CG is also concerned about Hashemi's recent public statements that Tawafuq would withdraw from the GOI; this could escalate Sunni violence, and only served to marginalize his own role in finding a political solution. Fastabend noted that Hashemi's fellow bloc leader Adnan Dulaimi had recently called Fardh al-Qanoon (FAQ) "a sword on the neck of the Sunnis." On the contrary, Fastabend told Hashemi, MNF-I is working hard to protect Sunnis, as demonstrated by our efforts in Ghazaliyah, Ameriyah, Mansour and Adhamiyah. MG Fastabend noted that Shia also complained FAQ operations targeted them unfairly.

¶ 16. (C) Hashemi said he made his comments reluctantly but felt compelled to do so because Sunnis had not achieved anything in the political process that they could point to as having benefited Sunnis. All Tawafuq leaders agreed they are being left out of real governance. Hashemi said he felt "meaningless and invaluable" in the GOI and "people ask me 'why the hell are you keeping your position?'" Hashemi called a Tawafuq pullout from the GOI "an option," said Tawafuq is still undecided about it, but is "seriously considering" it. Hashemi claimed that during a recent telephone conversation, President Bush "acknowledged the reasons behind my hard feelings" and taken them seriously.

¶ 17. (C) However, Hashemi acknowledged he had met very recently with the PM, and felt that they had the first positive meeting in months. The PM promised "to change his policies in various aspects." Hashemi said "I am waiting to see if he produces."

BAGHDAD 00001572 002 OF 002

Hashemi on AQI

¶ 18. (C) MG Fastabend asked what MNF-I could do to help in this situation. Hashemi claimed MNF-I did not think of his IIP as partners in the fight against AQI. MNF-I had failed to act on information IIP gave about AQI, instead arresting IIP leaders based on false information. Hashemi said MNF-I has not supported IIP in Baghdad or Anbar, although support was good in Diyala. Hashemi accused MNF-I of "dealing with AQI suspiciously": when MG Fastabend asked what he meant by that statement, Hashemi said some AQI suspects - known bad actors -- had been released a few hours after being arrested.

¶ 19. (C) If the US wants to defeat AQI, Hashemi advised, the key is political: help Sunnis politically. Military means should only be a catalyst in a broader menu of actions that bring Sunnis into the political process. He said the US should not confuse Sunni insurgents, who have no "international agenda," with AQI. Sunnis are frustrated, and when they compare AQI with what the IIP produces for them, many choose AQI. The labeling of all Sunnis as "terrorists," moreover -- particularly by senior individuals in the Government -- makes reconciliation impossible.

Detainees

¶ 110. (C) Hashemi expressed frustration at the lack of releases of Sunni detainees in MNF-I custody. The majority are innocent, he claimed, following with the non sequitur that "they could be brought back into the political process." Hashemi offered to give "guarantees" upon their release. He claimed visiting Senator Graham had told him he was worried about a "scandal" at MNF-I's Bucca detention facility, where many Sunni detainees are held.

¶ 111. (C) Hashemi said he sent 250 names of detainees he hoped would be released and for who he would give guarantees. Hashemi claimed former Ambassador Khalilzad promised all

would be released, but only seven were. He also claimed that in June he had been promised that 1500 detainees would be released every month, but PM Maliki ordered this stopped, and the US abided by Maliki's wishes without consulting Hashemi.

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